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A  
PANEGYRIC  
ON  
SAINT MARGARET,  
QUEEN AND PATRONESS OF SCOTLAND;

PRONOUNCED

IN ST PATRICK'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, AT THE FIRST  
VESPERS OF HER FESTIVAL, SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 1850;

BY

JAMES AUGUSTIN STOTHERT,

MISSIONARY APOSTOLIC IN THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF SCOTLAND.

EDINBURGH:

CHARLES DOLMAN, 13 SOUTH HANOVER STREET;  
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1850.

3

N.B.—Any profits arising from the sale of this Discourse  
will be devoted to the objects of St Margaret's Association.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Discourse has been published at the request of the Council of St Margaret's Association; a Society recently established in Scotland, with the sanction of the R. R. the Vicars Apostolic, for the assistance and protection of the Catholic Poor. A Prospectus of its proposed operations, together with its first Report, is already before the public. Before long, a more detailed account of its proceedings may be expected. It is much to be wished that its existence, and the means which it proposes for the attainment of its great object, should be extensively known. It has, in fact, resumed, in circumstances not very dissimilar to hers, many of the plans of benevolence which engaged the attention of its holy Patroness, St Margaret, during her life on earth, and which, as we firmly believe, still possess an enduring claim on her sympathy, and her prayers, in the kingdom of her God.

J. A. S.

*Edinburgh, July 27, 1850.*





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“The just shall be in everlasting remembrance.”—*Ps. cxi. 7.*

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HEROIC Sanctity is limited to no age, or rank, or nation. It has adorned every period of the Church's history; even times that now seem to have been the rudest, and the darkest, have felt the humanizing, and enlightening influence of its presence. It has shone brightly in the fiery trial of the martyrs; and not less so, in the periods of peace and rest from persecution, which have been from time to time granted to the Church. It has anticipated for youth, the wisdom and the commanding influence of age; it has secured for the aged, the unchanged simplicity, humility, and innocence of childhood. It has shed a glory around the hoary head, and made its feebleness venerable; while, in a short space, it has often been made perfect; and has consummated the labours, and received the reward of a long life, ere the sun had passed the meridian. The peasant's cottage, the humble calling of the artisan, have been dignified by its presence; it has added a new, and more enduring splendour, to the laurels of honourable victory; to the hereditary rank

of nobility ; to the crown of kings. It has flourished on the soil of every land visited by the eye of day ; from America to the farthest shores of Asia, from the extreme north, to the African coast, the surface of the earth is thickly strewn with spots, holy and memorable, as the birth-place, or the resting-place of a saint of God. Sanctity, in a word, is eminently Catholic ; universal in time ; in place, in rank, and age ; always, everywhere, and among all.

And if the earth is covered with its monuments, every one of them is immortal. Wherever it has been, its recollections have never ceased to be. Whole nations may fall away from the Faith ; but the memory of their Saints does not therefore perish. Their names, and the tradition of their virtues, of the sleepless nights passed by them in prayer, of their apostolic labours, of their inexhaustible charity, remain among the people, handed down from father to son, through a long series of ages. Often, too, the places where they were born, or where they lived, or preached, or fell asleep in the Lord, are pointed out to the traveller ; green spots in the desert, watered by the dews of heaven, amidst the arid wastes of ignorance and heresy, and sin, that stretch far and wide around him ; like those beautiful enclosures which he comes upon suddenly, in a secluded valley, or on the lonely mountain-side ; where the tomb-stones of thirty generations lie buried beneath the freshest verdure, overshadowed by the boughs of aged trees, that were not planted by the hand of man.

We need not travel far from home for illustrations of these remarks. Scotland is but a small section of the Universal Church ; three hundred miles are about the measure of its length ; its extreme breadth is considerably less ; yet up and down, on its rocky shores, in its inland glens, and its populous cities, the records of its Saints are written in unfading characters. There is hardly a county, for ex-

ample, in which the name of St Ninian is not preserved, in some church, or chapel, or cave, or holy well. At Whithorn in Galloway, the traveller is shown the place where he built the first church of stone in this country. Beneath the crypt of the old Cathedral of Glasgow, the guide points out to strangers the tomb of its bishop, St Mungo. If we sail among the islands of the Western Hebrides, we shall come to Iona, where St Columba's is still a most familiar name ; where antiquaries still speculate about the probable site of his holy tomb. Even on the farthest point of habitable land, at Kirkwall, in the Orkneys, there stands an ancient cathedral church, in perfect preservation, bearing the name of St Magnus. Turn whither we will, the names of Ss. Serf, and Fillan, and Paldy, or Palladius, and Cuthbert, meet the traveller at every step. Lastly, arriving in this city, he will find it not inferior to other places, in the number and the interest of its saintly memorials. As is befitting the capital of Scotland, it is inseparably associated with the closing hours of a holy queen ; on its highest and most conspicuous eminence, a centre of observation throughout a wide range of country, is the spot whence the purified spirit of St Margaret passed away to heaven. The people of this country have been alienated from the Saints who were once its glory ; they have even voted in their parliament that the offence of going on pilgrimage to chapels, crosses, and holy wells, and of observing the festival days of the Saints, should for the first time be punished with fine ; and for the second, with death ;\* they have forgotten the history that lies beneath the surface of their soil, and they boast of their forgetfulness. But the very soil bears witness against their ingratitude ; its mute rocks and stones are more eloquent than its faithless people. God shall not be defrauded of His praise, nor His Saints of their honour ;

\* 7th James VI., cap. 104 ; Oct. 24, 1581.

even though the stones must cry out. If the solitary tomb, on the wave-beaten island, or the deserted well, must be their only monument, "the just shall be in everlasting remembrance."

And yet, thanks to the Divine goodness, the memory of our Saints has not been left to depend entirely on those inanimate monuments; they have never been wholly robbed of their tribute of vocal praise. He who inspired the lips of children to cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David," amidst the silence of an apostate nation, has preserved a faithful remnant of their spiritual successors, to keep alive the flame of devotion, and the annual festival, in the secrecy of the concealed chapel; in the obscure alleys of cities, or in the remote and unsuspected chamber of the country-house. If it stirs the heart to remember the beauty of Scotland's ancient temples on an evening like this, when they put on their bravest array to honour the first Vespers of St Margaret's Day; when the altars of a thousand churches shone with gold, and silver, and jewels; but not so gloriously in the eye of heaven, as the living temples of the body of Christ, as the thousands of penitents, who flocked thither to prepare by holy confession for their happy communion on the morrow morning; if the thought of all this stirs the heart, and enlarges its conception of the glory of Catholic Scotland, there are yet more affecting recollections of the patient fortitude, the tried firmness of devotion that could cherish so well the memory of her Saints, with nothing to assist the senses, or to stimulate the imagination; in poverty and obscurity; pointed at by every idle finger, suspected and shunned by all. They honoured the Saints well who built, and adorned, and consecrated to their memory the many noble churches that lie in ruins all over the country; but they honoured them better, who, in an evil time, were con-

tent to bear the reproach of Christ for their sake ; if needful, to die for the preservation of their memory. The kings, and nobles, and princely-hearted prelates, who lavished their wealth upon the shrines of the Saints, did a great and a good work, and their reward is great ; but the poor priest who recited his Breviary in his garret, the handful of his faithful flock who stole up the dingy winding stair that led to it, to kneel in silence before the altar, and praise God on this day for the graces given to their country in, and through St Margaret, had a spirit within them nearly akin to the martyrs'. So it has been ; whether in the solemnities of the elder time, or in the earnest piety of more recent days of trial, the just have been in everlasting remembrance.

In the office which is just concluded, the Church teaches us to pray that divine charity may continually increase in our hearts, through the example and the intercession of St. Margaret. Accepting this twofold division, and that we may understand the value of her example, let us recal a few particulars of her history. Just eight hundred and thirty-three years ago, a great commotion happened in England. The king was assassinated by his rival ; and his children, two infant princes, were doomed to the same fate. But the usurper did not choose to irritate the nation still more against him, by openly taking their life ; so he put them on board of a ship, that was going to Sweden ; and secretly requested his friend, the king of that country, to despatch them for him. Providence, however, had other designs for one of them ; and overruled events in their behalf. The heart of the king of Sweden was touched with pity for their extreme youth, and their misfortunes ; yet he was afraid to offend the king of England, if he spared them, and entertained them kindly, as he was disposed to do. He, therefore, sent

them away privately to a friendly court ; to the king of Hungary. The elder of those boys died young ; his brother Edward grew up to be a man, and married Agatha, the sister of the queen. The youngest of their three children was St Margaret.

The tender infant at a German court, her father in exile, and his crown in the possession of a usurper, seemed unlikely enough ever to become the Patroness of Scotland. But, in the course of time, it all came about ; thus. Another revolution had placed the crown of England on the head of her father's uncle, the great St Edward the Confessor ; who invited his nephew to return with his family. The little Margaret was then eight years old. Those were rough and troubled times in Britain ; war and revolution were then of constant occurrence. Twelve years had hardly passed since Margaret and her family came to England, when St Edward gave up his holy soul to God, a few days after the solemn consecration of Westminster Abbey, in London. Before the end of the same year, William, Duke of Normandy, commonly called the Conqueror, became master of the throne of England, by the defeat and death of a rival claimant, who had kept brief possession of it.

Margaret's family did not immediately leave the country ; her brother Edgar even remained with the nobility to receive William on his arrival in London ; her sister Christina had by this time retired from the world into a convent. By and bye, however, Margaret and her brother found their residence in England so irksome, under the tyrannical rule of the Conqueror, that they once more set out upon the world, intending to return to the old home of their childhood in Germany. Just sixteen years after their arrival, they sailed from the shores of England.

And now the future Queen of Scotland has turned her back on this inhospitable island, and is going away to the

South, to her friends and relations in Hungary. She had probably never heard of Scotland, but as the bleak mountain-home of savages, the natural enemies of her father's nation. But, little as she thought it, she is on her way to Scotland, and not to Germany; it is not among the companions of her early years, but among our rude forefathers, that her life is to be spent, her heavenly crown is to be won. It is often said that there are no incidents in romance to equal the events of real life; and the truth of the remark cannot be doubted. If daily experience did not prove its truth, we might infer it from the simple fact, that those events are the means and ways designed by Divine Providence for a certain end, which is often wonderful, surpassing our feeble understanding; it cannot, therefore, surprise us if the means are also, sometimes, extraordinary; and if the tales of real life read like the pages of imagination. Providence is, at least, as fertile in resources as the novelist, and the best writer of fiction is he who best studies and copies the order of Providence in nature.

The winds and waves were its ministers in bringing St Margaret to our native land. A violent storm drove the vessel in which she sailed, out of its course, into the northern seas, and dashed it against the coast of the Firth of Forth. News of the disaster was quickly carried to king Malcolm, who then kept his court at Dunfermline. He had himself, once been an exile, and had met with great kindness at the court of St Edward, by whose timely assistance he had finally recovered his crown. He, therefore, hastened to repay the debt which he owed; he brought the royal fugitives to his palace, and entertained them hospitably. Margaret soon after became his wife; his counsellor; his good angel; the mother of his people. Twice an exile, before she was four-and-twenty, she had learnt what it was to suffer; to want; to be oppressed. Her life henceforth

was devoted to the relief of suffering, of poverty, and of oppression. That the comforts of a palace might not enervate her soul, already trained in the school of adversity, she chastised her body with St Paul, and brought it into subjection by fasting, and nightly watching. Like many of the Saints, she was much afflicted with weak health ; but it never afforded her a pretext for mitigating the rigorous discipline which she had imposed upon herself. To all around her, her behaviour was full of sweetness and charity. She obtained great influence over her husband, and used it in softening his rougher nature, in leading him on with herself in the love of God, and in suggesting and completing many social improvements among his subjects. The observance of God's holy law, and the beauty of His house, were favourite objects of her care. She procured the appointment of devoted clergy to the parishes and sees, and enforced with the weight of her authority, the due observance of Sundays and Festivals, and the Fast of Lent. Her children were educated by herself in virtue and piety. Three of them sat in succession, with honour, on the throne of Scotland ; one of them on the throne of England. Her son David inherited from his mother the munificence in endowing churches and religious houses, which has made his name celebrated.

It must surely have been a sweet and blessed influence that pervaded the kingdom of Scotland, while this wise and holy lady sat in her palace at Dunfermline, devising new measures for reforming and humanising the manners of its people ; teaching its future sovereigns the faith and fear of God ; and planning new gifts for His altar. A queen denying herself in food and the luxuries of the age, spending long nights in prayer, must have been a strange and remarkable sight. But the wonders of her sanctity are not yet disclosed. All else was surpassed, and thrown into the shade by her burning love for the poor. She never sat down at her own



table till she had waited upon nine little orphans, and twenty-four poor people. During Advent and Lent, her hospitality included three hundred of them every day. In imitation of her blessed Redeemer, she washed their feet, and gave them alms; and in the hospitals of the sick, she lovingly tended them in the most loathsome diseases. Charity so boundless must often have exhausted its means; she did not hesitate to part with her royal robes, and her jewels; and, more than once, she drained the treasury.

Three-and-twenty summers had now passed since the crown was placed on her brow, in the Abbey church of Dunfermline. Malcolm had been forced to go to war with England; the country was unsettled, and it was deemed prudent that the Queen should retire to the fortress of Edinburgh Castle, then deemed impregnable. Her husband and her sons were beyond the Borders, laying siege to the Castle of Alnwick. It was in the chill month of November; a sharp illness of six months, borne with miraculous patience, had exhausted her strength; and her holy soul was on the eve of its dismissal from its earthly tabernacle, though her years numbered only forty-seven. Her chief consolation was derived from the exercises of religion, from the ministrations of the man of God to whom she confided the secrets of her conscience, and who has left us a graphic description of her passage.

The last morning of her life, she rose with great difficulty, and was carried into her little oratory to hear Mass, and to receive for the last time, the blessed Body and Blood of our Lord. The effort was too much for her weakness, and she was carried back to her couch, where she lay awaiting her change. The ministers of religion stood about her, and commended her soul to God. In her hands she held the Black Cross of Scotland; and she often kissed it, and signed herself with it. The approach of death was visible on her

face, and her extremities were growing cold ; but she still could sing, in a faint voice, the 50th psalm, throughout, holding the cross before her eyes.

Presently a step was heard approaching her chamber. It was her second son, come from Alnwick to tell her, what she already knew by inspiration, that her husband and her eldest son lay dead upon the field. The news did not agitate her ; but raising her eyes and her hands to heaven, she replied, " I thank Thee, O Almighty God, because Thou hast willed that I should bear so great trials at my departure ; and because Thou hast willed my purification, as I hope, from some sinful stain, by my bearing them."

Then she began to recite the prayer at Mass, " O Lord Jesus Christ, who by the will of the Father, and the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, hast given new life to the world by thy death, deliver me ;"—she went no further ; her voice died away ; her lips ceased to move ; her spirit was in heaven.

Bitter was the wailing of her children, her orphans, her poor. Their tears and prayers followed her bier to the Abbey of Dunfermline, where she was laid beside her husband. Then the love for her memory sank deep into the heart of her country, which eight hundred years have not been able to extinguish. There are those who will not believe good of our ancient Saints ; but the traditions of a whole nation are not so baseless as they suppose. Human nature is not so senseless as to lavish its gratitude on those to whom it owes nothing ; common instinct teaches it to remember its benefactors, to forget those who have done nothing to deserve remembrance. If St Margaret is still mentioned with honour, if her name and her recollections are stamped on the natural features of the country, the very fact affords a convincing proof that she did some signal service, at least to the cause of humanity.

We are further taught to pray that charity may increase in our hearts, through her intercession. A walk of a few minutes would bring us to the spot, where she murmured her last prayer on earth ; whence she passed to her new office of patroness and friend of her adopted country, in heaven. But even that time is long, compared to the brief moment that is needed to secure for our requests the gracious notice of her glorified spirit. Oh, say not that heaven is so far off, that its blessed inhabitants can have no cognisance of us, and of our affairs ; when it takes but an instant for a soul, perfectly purified from the stain of sin, to pass thither ; when “ to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” Holy Scripture assures us that our Christian race is run in the immediate presence of an innumerable cloud of witnesses ; Christ himself teaches us that there is joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance ; the Saints, as we know, are with the Lamb, who hears all thoughts, and reads every heart. Time is the measure of space, even in our conceptions ; where time is annihilated, space no longer divides the absent from us. Heaven is not far from us ; it lies close above us, and around us. Wherever Christ is, there is heaven ; there are some of the heavenly hosts. Every Catholic tabernacle is a gate of heaven, through which holy souls often catch passing visions of the glory within the veil ; angelic ministers wait and hover around it. This holy house of prayer and sacrifice is filled with them.

Without doubt, then, or mistrust, let us beseech St Margaret, at this time, to remember Scotland. Many graces are, doubtless, preparing to descend upon it, through the intercession of her whose Festival we are about to celebrate to-morrow, and of another Saint, Columba, the Apostle of the Isles, whose anniversary occurs to-day. We call to mind, with grateful joy, that after every house of religion in this land had been levelled with the dust for three hundred

years, the first that arose from the ruins of the past, was one dedicated in her honour, and bearing her blessed name,—the Convent of St Margaret. An association for protecting the interests of the poor was instituted two years ago, on her Festival, and is called, the Association of St Margaret. We argue happy things for the future, from our experience of the past. We wait for the time when still more precious favours shall descend upon us, as our practical sense of the share allotted to the Saints of God, in the promotion of the designs of His Providence, grows stronger and more lively; when the relics of St Margaret shall be brought back in solemn state from the distant land whither they were carried in the day of Scotland's apostacy; when the pilgrim shall again kneel at her shrine, and feel the influence of her power. Then we may humbly hope to see the virtues which she had so much at heart once more adorning our native land; to see its churches rising from the dust, reflecting once more the beauty of holiness; to see its beloved children renouncing the unamiable systems that have so long deceived and perverted their manly understanding, and returning to the bosom of the great Catholic family.

Or if we shall sleep with our fathers before that time arrives, we shall bequeath our hopes to those that shall succeed us; not disturbed, if, like our holy Patroness, we are called away from expectations unfulfilled, from labours that seem unfinished, from sight unsatisfied, from spiritual privations harder to bear than even the bitter sorrows that threw their cloud upon her dying pillow. Be the same sacraments the solace of our last hour; be her intercession, to us then, a source of grace; inspiring confidence, anticipating heaven; be her society, and that of all the Angels and Saints of God, our joy and glory for evermore.

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